

*Remarks of Ambassador Louise Oliver  
At the Closing Reception of American History and Culture Week  
UNESCO Headquarters  
Paris, France  
October 7, 2008  
AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY*

Good evening everyone, bienvenue à vous tous et toutes. Welcome to the closing reception of our exhibit, Picturing America.

The Executive Board has spent all day discussing the issue of languages, including highlighting the role of language as a means of reinforcing cultural identity and demonstrating cultural diversity.

Although diverse cultures and languages enrich our lives, we also need a common language that can bring people together, and the language that can do that most effectively is the language of music.

One of the images in our exhibit is the picture entitled The Sources of Country Music by Thomas Hart Benton, which is why we decided that it would be very appropriate to entertain you at our reception this evening with some really great country music. I also happen to love country music. So thank you Carlton Moody for bringing your country music band here this evening.

In addition to country music, we are going to have some jazz for you. Although jazz originated in New Orleans, Louisiana, around the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it has now traveled to every part of the globe. Jazz represents energy, emotion, and freedom. It is the embodiment of the American spirit, the American soul.

As you take a last look at the 40 images that illustrate very diverse aspects of American history and culture, think also of those things we have in common, such as a love of jazz, which, along with our shared ideals, helps tie us together as Americans. Our thanks to the Jeanot Rabeson Trio for joining us this evening and for showing us what great jazz sounds like.

So put aside your concerns about the 35 C5 and results-based management for a while, and enjoy American music and art, American food and wine. We are here to celebrate American history and culture.

And to help us do that is my co-host for the evening, Adair Margo, the Chairman of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, known as PCAH, which has been very supportive both of the U.S. Mission and of the National Endowment of the Humanities, the U.S. government agency responsible for creating Picturing America.

PCAH was established by President Reagan because of the belief that American cultural life contributes to the vibrancy of our society and to the strength of our democracy. It focuses its

work in four areas: addressing the needs of youth; recognizing our nation's creative genius; preserving American cultural and historic treasures, and fostering international cultural cooperation. PCAH also serves as a bridge between the public and private sectors by stimulating private investment in the arts and humanities. Our First Lady, Mrs. Laura Bush, serves as Honorary Chairman of the President's Committee.

PCAH's current Chairman is Adair Margo, a fourth generation El Pasoan. The translation of that is that she is from El Paso, Texas. Before being appointed to this position by President Bush in 2001, she served as the Chair of the Texas Commission on the Arts. She ran the Adair Margo Gallery for over 25 years, and is passionate about culture. Adair also has a strong interest in international cultural understanding, and on behalf of PICAH, has signed Joint Communiqués for Cultural Cooperation between the U.S. and Mexico and the U.S. and Uruguay.

Before I give the floor to Adair, however, I want to express my thanks to some of the individuals and organizations that have helped support American History and Culture week: to Dr. Bruce Cole and Dr. Anne Radice of the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Institute of Museum and Libraries Services respectively for having led our symposium last week; to the National Endowment for the Arts for all the material they gave us on their program, The Big Read; to the U.S. National Park Service for the information they provided on American natural and cultural sites; to the Gettysburg Foundation for material relating to Gettysburg; to the American Film Institute for providing us with wonderful footage of great old films; to the Department of State, the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services for their financial support; and to President Abraham Lincoln for having miraculously honored us with his presence.

I also want to express my gratitude to Disney for lending us their Dixieland band last week, and to PepsiCo and Coca Cola for contributing soft drinks, juice and snacks for both our opening and closing receptions.

So now I'd like to turn the podium over to my good friend, Adair Margo, who will make a few remarks about Picturing America, and about the fundamental role that culture plays in the lives of Americans.